

## TRIBUTE TO RICHARD C. SHELBY

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, yesterday afternoon, RICHARD SHELBY delivered his farewell address here in the U.S. Senate.

It is difficult to think of the Senate without some of our retiring Members; it is nearly impossible to think of it without RICHARD SHELBY.

Like JIM INHOFE, he is a Senate institution. He has proudly served the State of Alabama for six terms in the Senate. That is 36 years of tireless work to make life better for the people of Alabama and for the American people as a whole.

He is currently the longest serving Senator in Alabama's history, as well as the longest serving Member in the history of the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

Throughout his Senate career, RICHARD has always kept his eye on getting things done for the people of Alabama, whether that is supporting Alabama military installations or the work NASA does in his State. He is a longtime NASA advocate, and as chairman and ranking member of the Subcommittee on Defense at the Senate Appropriations Committee, he has worked to ensure robust funding for our national security priorities.

He has also been a champion of funding to support Ukraine in its fight for freedom.

He has been a supporter of scientific research at various government Agencies, as well as in partnership with research universities.

RICHARD is also notable for being one of the tallest United States Senators. And that is significant to me because, as a tall guy myself, I don't often run into people I can look up to, but I look up to RICHARD, both literally and figuratively.

RICHARD's record of service and his dedication to people of his State are an inspiration to me and to many others as we carry out our work here in the U.S. Senate.

And I will miss his presence and his example as well as his sense of humor, which has lightened the mood around here on many challenging days.

But if anyone has earned his retirement, it is RICHARD SHELBY. And I wish him and Annette, his wife of 62 years, some very well-deserved relaxation and the very best of everything in the years ahead.

## TRIBUTE TO PATRICK J. TOOMEY

Mr. President, later today, Senator PAT TOOMEY, my longtime time colleague on the Senate Finance Committee, will deliver his farewell remarks.

PAT is known for, among other things, his steadfast commitment to pro-market policies—to fiscal responsibility, pro-growth tax policy, free trade, limited but efficient regulation—and, above all, for his command of these issues.

He has a tremendous grasp of finance, banking, and the economy and an equally tremendous understanding

of what the ins and outs of the Tax Code mean for business, saving and investment, and entrepreneurship.

And he is able to break down these oftentimes Byzantine subjects and explain them in plain language. And that, around here, is a gift.

These attributes made PAT the indispensable man during tax reform 5 years ago. His expertise and commitment were key to passage of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act—the wide-ranging reform of our Tax Code to put more money in American families' pockets and made American businesses more competitive.

Beyond tax policy, PAT has consistently fought protectionism in its many forms.

He has pushed back on financial market regulations that restrict fair competition, and he has fiercely advocated for market-opening initiatives that benefit Pennsylvania families, workers, and businesses.

He is going to be missed in the Senate—and on the Senate Finance Committee in particular—for his knowledge and his experience and for his practical approach to getting things done for the American people.

I admire PAT for his economic expertise, but I especially admire him for his thoughtfulness, his decency, and the fact that he is very principled.

He stayed committed to the causes he believes in, from improving economic opportunity for American families to reducing government waste to protecting taxpayer dollars.

And while I don't know what he will do next, I am confident that whatever he does will continue his commitment to building an economy that works for the American people.

I want to wish PAT and his wife, Kris, the very best on his retirement. I hope they are able to enjoy some well-deserved rest in the coming months, and I look forward to seeing all that PAT will do in the future.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LEE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOKER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

## COVID VACCINE

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, Winston Churchill said:

We sleep safely at night because rough men stand ready to visit violence on those who would harm us.

The men and women of the U.S. Armed Forces sign up for no small task. They join to serve their country; not for money, not for fame, not because it is glamorous in any way. They sign up because they understand that Winston Churchill was right—that the blessings of a free society are possible only if there are those willing to put the safety and well-being of their coun-

try ahead of their own safety and ahead of their own lives when necessary.

That solemn, sacred responsibility, the responsibility that every member of our Armed Forces has committed so nobly to upholding, deserves our utmost respect.

Regrettably, on August 9 of 2021, the Secretary of Defense issued a message to the force indicating his intent to require COVID-19 vaccination for all servicemembers. This mandate went into effect on August 24, 2021.

There were a lot of promises made at the time—promises suggesting that individual needs would be taken into account; individual needs including good-faith, sincerely held religious beliefs that might make it impossible for a servicemember to be vaccinated without violating his or her sincerely held convictions.

Unfortunately, it hasn't really panned out that way, as I will explain in a moment.

But in a nutshell, since the implementation of this vaccine mandate over almost the last year and a half, the United States military has dismissed 8,200 servicemembers for declining to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

That is over 8,000—more than 8,200—individuals, and it is not just the individuals themselves. Many, if not most, of these individuals themselves are mothers or fathers. They have got mouths to feed, families to care for—all of whom are placed in a really unfair position as a result of this mandate. Serving our country shouldn't require you to surrender your fundamental right to make medical decisions that are right for you, no matter the reason, and yet that is precisely what the Department of Defense continues to do.

My office has received hundreds of accounts from brave members of our Armed Forces detailing the hardships and the retaliation they have experienced for declining to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. One first sergeant in the Air Force writes:

I was involuntarily separated and my enlistment was curtailed. I was a First Sergeant with the U.S. Air Force Reserves at the time the COVID mandate was put into place. I did everything I could to be allowed to continue to serve my country. I filed my Religious AR, and when it got denied, I also filed an appeal, and that got denied.

She goes on:

All I wanted to do was to continue to take care of the members of my squadron and continue to serve this great country.

Likewise, a Marine officer writes:

My family was forced to move on very short notice back to the U.S. from Okinawa, Japan due to the loss of a job and the threat of travel restriction if we remained unvaccinated. . . . Many are far worse off than me.

Another lieutenant colonel with the Marine Corps Reserve was placed on "inactive status" with "no warning or notice that this would happen" and in the process lost TRICARE health insurance that his family relies on to